



MEMO



N O R T H C A R O L I N A D I V I S I O N O F
E M E R G E N C Y M A N A G E M E N T

Working to Minimize Disaster Damage

Employees of the N.C. Division of Emergency Management Hazard Mitigation Branch have been working steadily to complete projects and implement plans that minimize damage from any future natural disasters. From reducing project backlogs to streamlining the plan review process, the branch has implemented several changes in the past year that will help our state be more resilient in future disasters.

Closing Out Projects

In the last year alone, the Hazard Mitigation Branch programmatically closed out 115 projects from a wide variety of disasters across the state. Projects ranged from providing backup generators for critical public facilities following a winter storm to acquiring and relocating a group home after a hurricane.

Closeout Projects

<i>Winter Storm of 2000</i>	<i>24 projects</i>
<i>Winter Storm of 2002</i>	<i>60 projects</i>
<i>Winter Storm of 2003</i>	<i>2 projects</i>
<i>Hurricane Isabel</i>	<i>17 projects</i>
<i>Hurricane Frances</i>	<i>4 projects</i>
<i>Hurricane Ivan</i>	<i>4 projects</i>
<i>Hurricane Ophelia</i>	<i>4 projects</i>

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"This is a substantial body of work," said Hazard Mitigation Branch Chief, Chris Crew. "By working closely with our communities, we have been able to close out every federally funded, disaster-based project from Hurricane Fran through Hurricane Ophelia. Our partnerships with local emergency management agencies and local governments have truly made North Carolina more disaster resilient."

Crew said the state has acquired more than 7,000 structures and elevated more than 700 homes throughout the state since Hurricane Floyd struck in 1999.

The Hazard Mitigation Branch is now working on final reconciliation to fully close each disaster from Hurricane Floyd through Ophelia. The work should be completed by next spring.

Enhancing the Plan Review Process

The Hazard Mitigation Branch implemented several changes this year to improve the plan review process. To make it easier to submit and review mitigation plans, NCEM added a new file transfer protocol site so county, state and federal agencies could quickly circulate plans among each other. (For additional information on how to access this resource, email Chris Crew at jcrew@ncem.org.) The branch also surveyed local communities who had not submitted their review plans to solicit feedback on the process and find out what technical assistance may be needed. Finally, the branch created an internal database to track the progress of each community's plan throughout the review process.

"I want to thank our local partners for their hard work and collaboration throughout the revision process," said Crew. "I also want to thank and credit the county emergency management offices and governments for their feedback and partnership. We look forward to providing technical assistance as needed to support your plan."

As of July 15, hazard mitigation plans from 23 communities were already approved and adopted. Thirty of the state's 152 total plans were under review at NCEM, while 33 were under federal review and 66 had yet to be submitted.

During the past few years, NCEM staff have been working with dozens of municipalities to combine multiple local plans into a single county-level plan to increase efficiency and quality. Crew emphasized that joining a county-level plan does not preclude a town's ability to apply for or receive local hazard mitigation grants.

Evaluating Future Projects

Hazard Mitigation Branch employees are now working to process and evaluate nearly 40 potential mitigation projects from this year's winter storm, as well as non-disaster projects submitted through the FY10 Hazard Mitigation Assistance program.

While the division is no longer accepting letters of interest for projects this year, staff offered a few tips to local communities for future project applications:

- Be sure to include tax cards and elevation certificates when submitting buyout and elevation projects since these documents are the primary sources of information used to evaluate a project's cost effectiveness. Local tax offices and floodplain administrators are key sources for this information.
- Hydrology studies and detailed damage histories are required for complex storm water management projects. The more detailed documentation a community includes about past damages, the better.
- Remember that a fully-approved FEMA Hazard Mitigation Plan is required for funding under both disaster and non-disaster funding streams.

NCEM will solicit local governments for new potential mitigation projects next spring. In the meantime, mitigation staff looks forward to working concurrently with communities on plan and project needs.



Pitt County (top) group home that repeatedly flooded after heavy rains. The new group home (bottom) was built on higher ground.



Lessons Learned From the Gulf

By Diane Curtis, NCEM Eastern Branch Manager

Is North Carolina ready for oil from the Gulf?

That was the question that sent Dianne Curtis, N.C. Emergency Management and Steve Lewis, Division of Water Quality to Baton Rouge, Louisiana for a week. The two were sent to observe the Incident Command structure and coordinated oil spill recovery operations that have been unfolding along the Gulf Coast.

“We went down there with specific goals in mind,” said Curtis. “Our oil spill plan is in place and it’s a strong plan. But we wanted to find out if - and how - it could be improved.”

Dianne and Steve first visited the Louisiana Governor’s office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. There they discussed the spill response with personnel from the Louisiana State Emergency Operations Center. They watched as command staff briefed Gov. Bobby Jindal and participated in conference calls with the parishes and British Petroleum. As Tropical Storm Bonnie formed in the Atlantic, Curtis and Lewis sat in on a table top exercise in the state EOC to test Louisiana’s plans for how the state would coordinate hurricane preparations and recovery with oil spill response operations.

Later in the week they traveled to the Incident Command Post in Houma, Area Command in New Orleans, and finally to Port Fourchon where they directly observed oil spill cleanup on the beach and in the marshes. The two were able to witness the intricacies, challenges and logistics of a large-scale operation, which included approximately 1,500 workers cleaning up the beach and another 1,500 workers in the marsh.



Steve Lewis and Dianne Curtis (right) take notes on the beach at Port Fourchon, LA, after observing oil spill cleanup operations.



Oil on the beach at Port Fourchon, LA

“Louisiana shared some excellent lessons with us regarding their response and recovery efforts,” said Curtis. “Though we were limited on time, we were able to bring back a lot of information and best practices that can benefit North Carolina should something like this threaten our coastline.”

N.C. Food Safety and Defense Task Force Protect the Food Supply

The North Carolina Food Safety and Defense Task Force was created in 2003 to help ensure that the state's food supply system and agricultural industry are protected from intentional and unintentional contamination.

The task force coordinates state government agencies and public-private efforts to protect the food supply in several ways. First, the group works to improve safety and security of the food supply system. The group also works to reduce terrorism threats and improve food safety and defense mitigation and response plans. Finally, the task force implements or coordinates training for key stakeholders.

"The food supply system includes edible items such as produce and meats that go from the farm to the fork," said Tim Johnson, NCEM Human Services Assistant Manager. "When bacteria like E-coli get on food or ingredients during the production process, the food becomes tainted and poses a health risk. The task force has helped to ensure faster accountability and greater traceability in finding the E-Coli's point of origin and the steps needed to stop additional illnesses."

In the summer of 2007, the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, N.C. Division of Public Health, N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources and 86 local health departments coordinated their response to the nationwide recall of Castleberry canned food products due to botulism contamination. North Carolina proved to be a national leader when the task force's various agencies successfully removed more than 30,000 cans of recalled products. The product not only was removed from retail store shelves, but also from pantries of child care centers, churches, food banks and youth activity groups.

Building on the success of the Castleberry recall, DENR made changes to its food recall and emergency response procedures to improve the efficiency of staff resources, integrate technology and implement a tiered-response approach.

The Food Safety and Defense Task Force is comprised of representatives from the departments of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Environment and Natural Resources, Health and Human Services, Crime Control and Public Safety, and the University of North Carolina System. Private industry representatives from Food Lion which represents the National Integrated Food Safety System and the Global Food Safety Infrastructure are also key members of the task force. DENR serves as the lead agency of the task force which meets bi-monthly to discuss current issues, concerns and potential threats to the state's food system.

Eight committees focus the task force's efforts on specific areas of food safety: dairy security, education and training, fresh produce safety, intra-agency laboratories, outreach and communications, recall enhancement and conference planning.

The task force's five-year strategic plan places a greater emphasis on training. A \$47,000 federal grant will be used during the next five years for training and exercise initiatives. Also, the group plans to develop a yearly food safety defense conference where attendees can receive specific training and participate in exercise sessions sponsored by each task force agency. Each agency will provide training in their area of expertise. For instance, N.C. Emergency Management will teach emergency operations procedures, emergency roles and responsibilities and incident command structure. Conference attendees are expected to include representatives from county health departments, state agencies and the food industry.

Johnson sees NCEM's main contribution as helping to develop the training component and incorporating food safety defense logic in the community, possibly even involving the community emergency response team concept.

Disaster Recovery Template Helps Counties Organize Recovery Efforts

For months, N.C. Division of Emergency Management's Recovery Section has been working on a tool to help counties organize recovery efforts following a disaster. This disaster recovery template provides a base that each county can take and adapt to their specific needs.

The recovery template outlines county responsibilities in detail based on the 16 recovery support functions: administration and continuity of government, agriculture, economic restoration, education, emergency management, environmental preservation, finance, health and human safety, housing, individual assistance, planning and mitigation, public information and community relations, public works, security and re-entry, utility restoration and volunteers and donations.

"We wanted to do something for counties to help them plan for and recover from disasters faster. Hopefully, this template incorporates the tools to make this happen," said Joe Stanton, the Division's Deputy Recovery Chief.

The template will help counties recover faster after disasters by organizing county recovery procedures in one central location. The plan also will help to eliminate confusion between public and private responders by defining roles and responsibilities of each during a disaster.

"The plan should help to foster positive relationships and generate partnerships as county resources work together to recover and rebuild following a disaster," said Stanton.

It is up to the county to recruit subject matter experts from the public, private and non-profit sectors to participate in committees for each recovery support function. The goal is to include people who are important to the county's development in subsequent recovery efforts.

The template also includes appendixes for quick reference such as: a disaster debris management plan, laws and ordinances, recovery function checklist, recovery plan contact list, recovery plan methodology, roles and responsibilities and status reports.

"The end result is a plan that should allow counties to be better organized in their recovery efforts," said Stanton.

The recovery template ties directly into the federal National Response Plan.

State emergency management officials anticipate the template will be ready for distribution to the counties in late August or early September.

"North Carolina is ahead of the curve in recovery planning. This template is a great tool that will enhance and expedite our recovery efforts," concluded Stanton.

Emergency Management Forum

The North Carolina Emergency Management Forum is scheduled for Wednesday, Aug. 4 from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Officials from N.C. Emergency Management will participate in an open panel discussion on a variety of topics including: the status of North Carolina's oil spill plan, the new EMPG formula, homeland security risk assessment, current disaster resource contracts, how private sector businesses re-enter disaster areas, status of the model nursing home disaster plan, and numerous other topics of interest.

Those unable to attend in person can observe the forum via ConnectPro, a web conferencing and seminar software that allows conference attendees to view and participate from their personal computer. An email with log-in instructions to ConnectPro will be given days before the forum.

The Emergency Management Forum is held twice annually as a way for local and state emergency management officials to discuss potential threats, legislative changes or other issues that impact the emergency management community. For more information, contact Brenda Jones at 919-712-9216 or bmjones@ncem.org.

NCEM COOP Works

The North Carolina Division of Emergency Management activated its continuity of operations plan July 20, after flooding in the basement of the Administration Building forced key sections to evacuate.

More than 1,000 gallons of water flooded the basement as maintenance crews worked to repair a malfunctioning HVAC unit. The water damage affected electrical wiring, HVAC duct work, electronic equipment, drywall and carpeting.

The 24-Hour Operations Center, Information and Plans, Emergency Services and Human Services' sections relocated to their designated alternate facility at the Disaster Operations Recovery Center. The 24-Hour Operations Center evacuated at 9 a.m. and was operational at the alternate site 45 minutes later. Other sections regrouped in similar fashion.

"We've exercised our continuity plan several times, and now when the plan was actually needed, it worked as it should," said Ed Jenkins, NCEM Information and Plans manager.

The 24-Hour Operations Center contact numbers remain the same at 919-733-3300 and 800-858-0368. The only resource not available is the national air warning attack system. VIPER portable capabilities are functioning, but the NCEM EOC talk group is the only group monitored.

The extent of damage and repairs are still being assessed, but NCEM officials estimate employees will be able to return to their normal duty stations within a few weeks.

NC HART Conducts Training

The North Carolina Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team will conduct water rescue training Aug. 10 – 12 at Lake James in Burke County. The 32 HART members, representing 10 agencies, will participate in the training. Rescue teams will use N.C. National Guard's U-60 Black Hawk helicopter to practice disaster operations and flood rescue techniques to save victims from a simulated urban flood. Burke County Emergency Management will provide support to the HART teams.

"The technicians will use their whole catalog of rescue devices in rescuing multiple survivors from the lake in various scenarios," said Todd Brown, NCEM Emergency Services Manager. "This training builds on their previous experience and enhances their decision making process to ensure the most effective, most efficient and above all the safest rescue possible."

NCHART is a highly specialized team consisting of N.C. National Guard assets matched with N.C. Emergency Management and local emergency services personnel to form a mission ready package for helicopter-based rescues. NCHART can respond at the request of a local emergency management coordinator or NCEM Area Coordinator. Examples of missions include: swift water or flood rescue, lost persons with injuries, urban or wilderness high angle rescue.



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Questions and Comments can be directed to:

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"In the Business of Saving Lives and Protecting Property"

The North Carolina Division of Emergency Management was formed in 1977 to coordinate the preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation activities of all agencies for emergency management within North Carolina. It performs this mission by planning, organizing, staffing, equipping, training, testing and activating emergency management programs during times of need.